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A NEW ENGLAND HIGH-SCHOOL LIBRARY

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Had a visitor at the Manchester High School prior to October, 1913, made inquiry concerning the school library, he would have been shown a small room containing about one thousand volumes, presided over by a teacher whose spare period was being employed in struggling to correct papers and to keep at the same time a watchful eye on a few students gathered there ostensibly to study but really, unless all signs failed, to enjoy life when the teacher should become too engrossed in her huge pile of themes to notice their employment—or the lack of it.

The tireless efforts of a few teachers who realized the difference between conditions and possibilities have changed all this. The beginning of the year 1913 found the floor space allotted to library purposes increased by the cutting of a doorway through to an adjoining room, new shelving added, the number of volumes increased, and, in October, a trained librarian chosen.

Since the organization of the library at that time, the problems of guiding students, during the brief period of a high-school course, to noble ideals and definite notions of some means of attaining them; of showing them a way for obtaining a broader education, which is denied the majority in the shape of a college course; and of thus giving them a key to the door of greater efficiency and a broader outlook on life, have pressed for solution.

Of course, the public library is open to all students, but how few have any knowledge of what it has to offer or have ever dreamed that it is more than it seems to their parents and others—a beautiful building to show with pride to visiting friends, a storehouse for books of dry history and biography, or a distributing agency for popular novels! How many women ever think of going to the public library for books on embroidery, cooking recipes, the care of

children, music scores, ideas for an evening entertainment? How many men would apply to the same source for books on gardening, poultry raising, designing, mechanical engineering, electricity, architecture, or any of the subjects about which they might need information in connection with their daily life? I fear not an overwhelming majority of the residents of any city. If the high-school library is to secure the best and most lasting results, it must aim beyond the simple assisting of pupils in gaining necessary information in connection with school subjects, and, by giving them a glimpse of this "People's University," as Carlyle has called the public library, disclose what it can do for them and point the way, even for the poorest, to a mental development that costs nothing and may mean much through all the years of life.

In an attempt to do this, we strive, so far as possible, to guide the inquiring reader to the *use* of the book he needs rather than to pursue the easier course of finding the material and placing it before him. We believe we help him to greater efficiency by making him familiar with the card catalogue, with a few general reference books, and with other library tools which puzzle many older and wiser heads than his; and that a little effort on our part in explaining the value of such tools and in teaching him to use them intelligently gives him a feeling of power and confidence. This enables him to seek for himself many items of information which, through pure diffidence, he might hesitate to secure from the busy desk attendant of the public library.

Among the many privileges and opportunities, therefore, that come to the school librarian, one of the most important and far-reaching seems to me that of systematic instruction in the use of books and libraries. During the past year, every student in our high school has received such instruction, the course including practice in the use of the unabridged dictionary, of encyclopedias, of the card catalogue, and of the book index and the periodical index; and a brief explanation of classification, which, to avoid confusion, is the same as that used in the city library.

In taking up the work, the school was divided into groups of about thirty each. To each group was given two hours of instruction in regard to the tools and books to be used, after which each

student received a typewritten set of explanations covering the main points of these talks. Accompanying this was a set of questions involving the use of the tools described in the class instruction, brief answers to which were to be written and handed in during the ensuing two weeks. These papers were corrected and graded by the librarian, and the ratings passed on to the teachers in English, who gave pupils credit for this work. Some idea of the object of these questions may be gained from the following examples.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF THE LIBRARY

(Pupils should familiarize themselves with these general directions before attempting to do the work assigned.)

The table of contents is in the front of a book and gives the contents arranged by chapters in the order in which they occur in the book.

The index is much fuller than the table of contents, is arranged alphabetically, and is generally found in the back of the book. The index to a set of books is generally found in the back of the last volume.

To use a dictionary, look first for any word in the body of the dictionary; if it is not there, read over the table of contents to see if it is included in any special list.

In using the *Century Dictionary*, note that it is in 12 volumes. Volume 9 contains proper names of all kinds, volume 10 is an atlas, volumes 11 and 12 are supplements which bring the material up to 1910.

The encyclopaedia is arranged alphabetically, and the letters on the back of each volume show the contents.

The *New International* and the *Nelson Encyclopaedia* are in this library.

The card catalog is a list of all the books in the library. It is made on cards which are arranged alphabetically. Cards are made for the AUTHOR, SUBJECT, and TITLE of a book. The subject headings are in red ink.

To use the card catalog, look up the name of the author, subject, or title in its alphabetical order.

The book number is in the upper left-hand corner of the catalog card and is in red ink. The book number (LR.K89) consists of a class number (LR.), showing the class to which the book belongs, and an order number (.K89.).

To find a book on the shelf, look first for the class number, then, alphabetically, for the order number.

To find material in the magazines, use indexes known as *Poole's Index* and *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*.

The *Readers' Guide* is an author and subject index which is published monthly. At the end of three months all of the numbers for that year are put in one alphabet and at the end of a year form a yearly volume. Every five years a large volume in one alphabet is formed.

To use the *Readers' Guide*, look for the name of the subject you want in its alphabetical order. If you want a recent subject look in a recent index. A list of the magazines indexed is found in the front of each volume.

SPECIMEN SET OF QUESTIONS

As the object of the work is to familiarize students with a few of the most common reference books and to enable them to look up independently the references which occur from day to day, each student should rely entirely upon his own efforts in doing the work assigned.

Write brief answers and give sources of information.

I

Lesson on *Webster's Dictionary*, *Century Dictionary*, and *Atlas*.

What is meant by the Holy Grail?

What was the Rump Parliament?

What is the correct pronunciation of *calliope*?

What is the meaning of *ex officio*?

Who is Walter Damrosch?

What is the meaning of the abbreviation S. P. C. C.?

What is the story of Aladdin?

Find something about the Garden of Eden.

Locate on the map and give population of Bakersfield, Vt.

What was the Magna Charta?

(To illustrate pronunciation and meaning of words, abbreviations, foreign phrases proper names, etc.)

II

Lesson on the encyclopedia: Write the name of the encyclopedia, volume, page, and heading under which you found the article.

Information about: Football

Atlantic telegraph (cross-ref.)

Government of India (subheading)

Manufacture of silk (in article on "silk")

Size of the Great Pyramid (in article on "pyramids")

III

Lesson on the card catalog and book index: Write the number of the book and locate it on the shelf. When necessary, add volume and page.

Find a book on photography (subject entry)

Find *The Sketch Book* (title entry)

In Chapman's *Handbook of Birds* find about the cherry bird (author entry and simple index)

Find a book on telephones (subject entry)

Find about Grant's Wilderness campaign in *The Civil War and the Constitution* by Burgess (author entry and index to set of books)

Find *Pride and Prejudice* (title entry)

IV

Lesson on the *Readers' Guide*: When you find a large number of references, select five which seem to you among the best and explain each reference.

Find a list of articles on: Boy scouts

Uses of wireless (special phase of topic)

Leaders in the present war (date limit)

TEN QUESTIONS, MISCELLANEOUS IN CHARACTER, TO BE ANSWERED FROM ANY SOURCE

What is the Taj Mahal?

What is the population of Windsor, Vt.?

What is meant by Dotheboy's Hall?

What is the uniform of the U.S. cavalry?

How does Germany compare in size with Texas?

How many students were in Harvard University last year?

Who designed the Statue of Liberty?

Give the date of Mark Twain's death.

Give a synonym for *fortitude*.

Find an article on President Wilson's summer home.

As may be seen, topics of general interest were selected, such as would show the variety of information for which ready answers can be found in common reference books. After the papers were corrected, personal interviews with pupils were held, to point out errors and clear up difficulties upon which it was impossible to touch in the limited time assigned to class work. The requirement of brief answers was designed to prevent the copying of an article and to show how to glean the most essential facts from a rapid survey. The interest among students was gratifying. A similar course will be given to the Freshman class this year and an advanced course to upper classes.

We find that oral composition and debates offer excellent opportunities for individual help that makes for rapid progress.

Last year, when a class was studying the Victorian era in English literature, the best books relating to social life in England at that time, and brief but interesting biographies of the authors, together with some specimens of their work, were borrowed from the city library and placed on reserve shelves. Students were allowed to select from these at will and to make topical reports in class. The results showed a high degree of interest and wide reading. A reserve shelf in Roman history was also well patronized.

In the American history department, Seniors were required to write papers on some phase of the Civil War which interested them. A suggested list of topics was given, and some fifty books bearing on these subjects were borrowed from the city library. Such subjects as "Prices during the War," "Social Life in the North (and the South)," "Personal Recollections," "New Hampshire in the War," "Manchester during the War" were developed in excellent papers. In this department, also, especially fine editorials in the *New York Times*, to which the library subscribes, are required reading from time to time, and by such means students are encouraged to keep abreast of the best thought of the day.

We have now about two thousand volumes, and more than six hundred stereographic views, and we subscribe for a dozen magazines. All these are circulated freely; even the current numbers of the magazines may be borrowed at the close of school if returned before the hour of opening the following morning. The past year has shown an increase in our circulation for home use of 222 books and 558 pictures, while our total of reference users outnumbered that of the previous year by 6,732.

Such a record would have been impossible without the close co-operation of the teachers and their hearty support in all that we have tried to do toward making the library not only a workshop in which can be found material for bettering the output of the entire school, but also a place where a pleasant hour may be enjoyed with a magazine or a book, and a general acquaintance gained with good literature.